

**DESIGNING
CURRENT
AND FUTURE**

**PARTICIPATION
APPROACHES
DIRECTIONS**

CONFERENCE REPORT

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London Doctoral Design Centre
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A copy of this report and a video documenting the researchers and keynote speakers presenting at the Designing Participation conference can be found at:
<http://ldoc-cdt.ac.uk/designing-participation-conference>

The research generated at the Designing Participation conference was only made possible by the attendance of a range of diverse individuals, including those working within the participatory arts field, the wider arts sector and academic institutions.

The companies and institutions represented by the attendees at the Designing Participation conference can be viewed across pages 7 and 8. The LDoc research team would like to thank all attendees at the conference for their valuable contributions.

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Foreword

by Julia Johnson

The participatory arts field is currently negotiating its role within an uneasy political climate where the impact of austerity has resulted in a number of shocking occurrences and tragic events, predominantly affecting the hearts and minds of a range of afflicted communities. Those working within the participatory arts field are adapting to a dynamic environment and there is a sense that now, more than ever, the role of the arts as a therapeutic catalyst for social change is fundamental to healing a divided British society.

In 2010, Arts Council England (ACE) produced a review titled *Adult Participatory Arts: Thinking it Through*. Its objective to “gain a better understanding of the work of a range of organisations that have participation and engagement at their hearts” was conveyed through the best practice of thirteen ACE funded participatory arts companies working in the UK.¹ Despite the wealth of expertise developed within the successful organisations, it can be argued that the exclusion of other innovative and relevant organisations working within the Arts affected the review’s potential to harness the plurality of voices required to generate meaningful inductive research into the value of participatory arts as perceived by a range of communities. The review concluded with a series of follow-up recommendations for the participatory arts companies involved. To date, the review is Arts Council England’s most recent to focus exclusively on adult participatory arts. The *Designing Participation* conference, organised by three London Doctoral Design Centre researchers, was held over one day at the Royal Society of Arts in London on 26th May 2017, where research was generated in the follow-up of three key recommendations from the ACE 2010 report:

1. “That the 13 companies share expertise and intelligence on their work within the charitable and third sectors and disseminate this to a wider audience.”
2. “That an evidence base for participatory work is developed, to be shared between the 13 review companies, similar arts organisations and Arts Council England, so that they can respond more easily to government policies and targets.”
3. “That a widely accessible and effectively managed participatory arts knowledge base is developed in partnership with an appropriate organisation, such as a higher education institution.”

[1] Arts Council England. (2010) *Adult Participatory Arts. Thinking it through. A review commissioned from 509 Arts*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/adult_participatory_arts.pdf>.

The review's recommendation for "a shared approach to evaluation"² informed a further objective for the Designing Participation conference. The thirteen companies originally included in the ACE 2010 report were invited to the conference, as were a diverse range of established participatory arts organisations, individual facilitators, academics and researchers working within the field nationally, via the support of London Doctoral Design Centre (LDoc), a centre that: "provides cross institutional PhD studentships and training, working in collaboration with key industry partners to promote and support world class design research study and knowledge exchange."³

The conference included a series of research activities where delegates addressed a set of questions, designed to respond to the ACE 2010 recommendations. Their responses were recorded and collected by the three organising researchers. This report analyses the data collected and brings together the plurality of expertise shared amongst delegates at the conference, so that the research generated might be disseminated to wider audiences navigating the participatory arts field and support the development of further research and practice. The conference ended with the development of the delegates collective manifesto for future participation, which can be seen on page 27 of this conference report.



Julia Johnson welcoming delegates to the Designing Participation conference.

[2] Ibid., Arts Council England (2010).

[3] LDoc is "a collaboration between three internationally leading London based higher education institutions: The Royal College of Art (RCA), Kingston University (KU) and the University of the Arts London (UAL)". London Doctoral Design Centre. (2017) [Internet] Available from: <<http://ldoc-cdt.ac.uk>>.

The nature of participatory arts programmes

Currently within the UK there is a vast array of participatory arts programmes being delivered to communities. However funding for and research around participatory arts programmes remains limited. Whilst delegates from the Designing Participation conference mentioned that participatory arts programmes should not only engage with those who are defined as excluded, it is essential to refer to their notable engagement with a range of marginalised and vulnerable communities. Participatory arts programmes are held in diverse settings such as prisons, refugee centres and hospitals. Through the development of creative outcomes, programmes have the potential to benefit participants therapeutically and provide opportunities to affect social change relevant to that particular community.

Participatory arts programmes and their outcomes can potentially:

- o Provide participants with opportunities to develop creative skills, as well as basic functional skills.
- o Facilitate challenging conversations around sensitive subjects.
- o Improve participants' wellbeing and confidence.
- o Offer opportunities for community cohesion and the reduction of stigma.
- o Act as an alternative representation of communities in comparison to the media's representation.
- o Open up dialogues with local authorities.
- o Develop participants' voices to affect social change.

Conference attendees

The following participatory arts companies, arts organisation, universities and institutional centres were represented by delegates attending the Designing Participation conference.

Participatory arts companies:

Access All Areas

CoolTan Arts

Create Arts

Entelechy Arts*

Green Candle*

Haringey Shed

Immediate Theatre

Magic Me*

Monkey Tree Projects

Photovoice

Spare Tyre*

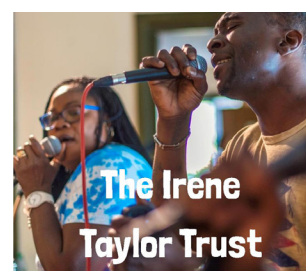
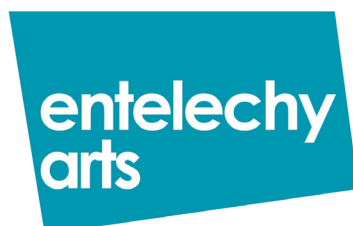
Streetwise Opera*

Tender

Young Vic

Utopia Arts

* The participatory arts companies included in the original ACE 2010 report.⁴



Some examples of the participatory arts companies represented by attendees at the Designing Participation conference.

[4] Arts Council England. (2010) *Adult Participatory Arts. Thinking it through. A review commissioned from 509 Arts.* [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/adult_participatory_arts.pdf>.



Mix of delegates attending the Designing Participation conference.

Academic institutions:

- Anglia Ruskin University
- London Doctoral Design Centre
- Kingston University London
- Open College of Arts
- The Royal College of Art
- Roehampton University
- University of the Arts London

Arts organisations:

- PictureLight Productions
- Foto Document
- HOUSE Biennial
- Photofusion
- Serpentine Gallery
- The Roundhouse

Keynote speakers



Cian Binchy

Cian Binchy is a performer and author. Access All Areas. (2017).
Available from: <<http://www.accessallareatheatre.org/cian-binchy>>.



Rosy Martin

Rosy Martin is a renowned photographer and psychological therapist working with a photographic practice she has developed based on re-enactment (2017).
Available from: <<http://www.rosymartin.info/home.html>>.

Research objectives

Delegates worked together as five separate groups, each feeding back their responses to the following research questions:

Activity 1

What are the:

- Q1. Benefits of delivering participatory arts programmes to the communities involved?
- Q2. Challenges with delivering effective participatory arts programmes and projects?
- Q3. Most effective types of methodologies to deliver participatory arts programmes and projects?

Activity 2

What kind of evaluation techniques:

- Q4. Provide a genuine understanding of participants' experiences on programme?
- Q5. Support the improvement of participatory programmes and projects?

Activity 3

- Q6. What future opportunities and directions have the potential to inform the effective design and delivery of participatory arts programmes?
- Q7. Our collective manifesto for future participation: What two main points should be taken forward?

The data collected from each of the activities is analysed by the three organising researchers in the following section of the report.

“ Sometimes it is the arts centre that creates the community. Because they might be working with people who have something in common but might not otherwise connect ”

A delegate's comments on ideas of community cohesion and empowerment during activity 1 of the Designing Participation conference.

Activity 1:

Benefits, challenges and methodologies

Research analysed by Jack Champ

Benefits, challenges and methods

Participatory arts programmes employ diverse methodologies to engage the creative interests of communities. As researchers, we are aware of the value these programmes bring to the communities they are embedded in.

Activity 1 therefore focused on gathering responses to the first three questions posed to the groups, relating to the benefits and challenges of delivering participatory art programmes and the methodologies employed within its practice. Groups were asked to respond to the three questions below and record their responses on sheets of card. A member from each group presented the findings back to the wider delegate cohort.

What are the:

- Q1. Benefits of delivering participatory arts programmes to the communities involved?
- Q2. Challenges with delivering effective participatory arts programmes and projects?
- Q3. Most effective types of methodologies to deliver participatory arts programmes and projects?

Question 1 group feedback key points

- o Participatory organisations provide high social value and value for money.
- o Projects connect people and increase social inclusion among marginalised groups.
- o Bridges integration into communities and can be a safety net to help people out of a crisis.
- o Can foster a sense of pride and a space to be creative.
- o Helps build confidence, self-esteem and skills and provides a sense of authorship and ownership.
- o Can be life changing.
- o Allows voices to be listened to and initiates a shared language.
- o Assists community cohesion and provides agency.
- o Gives people permission to fail and permission to succeed.
- o Chance to reflect, giving time, generosity.
- o Connecting to a wider development of education goals.
- o Providing social space.

Question 2 group feedback key points

- o Time is very important for building trust and relationships.
- o We don't live and work in social structures which really lend themselves to participative forms of working.
- o Retaining the structure of your methods throughout a project.
- o Accepting and embracing whatever happens and not slipping into the language of failure.
- o Considering whether you can fail or if failing is all part of participation and can therefore still become a successful outcome for participants.
- o Qualitative vs quantitative approaches - there is an always an inherent conflict between these two in delivering set outcomes.
- o Breaking down internal stereotypes in organisations.
- o Building up confidences and support amongst participants, so they can fully participate because confidence is required to share things - to be able to have a sense of confidence and choice to share with workshop leaders and with other participants.

Question 3 group feedback key points

- o Providing accessibility, supporting travel by picking up people to bring them to a workshop or activity session.
- o Finding effective ways to communicate with participants and other people involved. Embracing new forms of social media – Facebook messaging and texting through online texting services to increase attendance.
- o Balancing this communication to ensure people feel welcome and are encouraged but not pressurized to attend.
- o Continuous encouragement throughout a project, especially for vulnerable people, is important to foster a sense of ownership over the project.
- o Allowing project user led ownership of a space means projects are then defined by participants rather than practitioners.
- o Importance of flexibility around projects and shifting the parameters as you go along to see what is working and what is not working. This helps with project planning so that you know who the people involved are and their needs and achievement goals for participation.
- o Manipulating funders by stating what you are going to do in such a way - even where the outcome is different to that which was expected.
- o Trying to protect the people that you are working with by making sure that there is a space for them which is not overly determined by the funders' input (financial support and evaluation techniques).
- o Important to establish if projects are being delivered to, delivered by or delivered for the community? Language is important – which community is served and in which way?

Summary of themes:

Confidence, Trust and Ownership

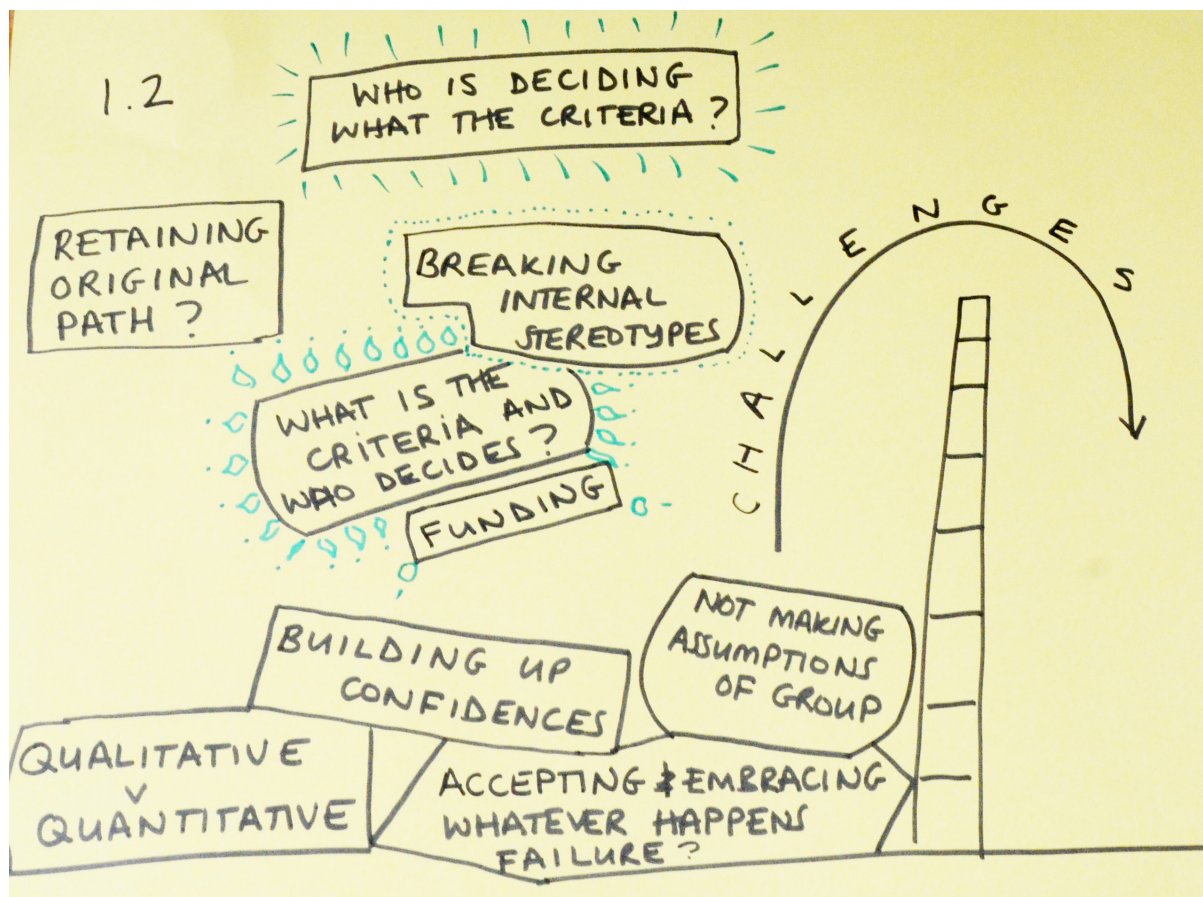
Delegates expressed the importance of building trust and providing participant ownership of programmes. It was accepted that whilst trust takes time to build, the benefits of participants trusting in practitioners are far reaching. Once individuals trust in the process, they can fully participate and the opportunity to have their own voice, socialise and take ownership can ultimately be life changing.

Community

Projects can really add social value and value for money, helping to include marginalised groups and bring integration and support in their local communities, but also directly to individuals. However, discussions took place around the importance of using the language of community carefully: Who is the community? Are projects delivered to, by or for this group?

Funding

Whilst organisations can provide excellent value for money, concerns were raised regarding obtaining and justifying funding. One group spoke candidly about the need to deceive funders to ensure programmes survived, even when outcomes were not as expected. The view, that projects should prioritise the needs of their users/members over meeting the stringent evaluation requirements of funders, was also expressed.



Activity 1 research responses.

Holistic view

Delegates were keenly aware that participation is not something currently ingrained in existing social structures and working relationships. For programmes to be successful it was suggested that the whole project needs to be considered, to not only ensure that structures put in place to guide the project are maintained but also that there is flexibility to adapt or make changes to the structure if required. For the entire course of projects, it is also very important for particularly vulnerable individuals to be supported during successes and failures to ensure their journey is beneficial.

Communication

Communication was considered key to engaging with participants and maintaining connections. The use of social media and digital communication was viewed as an excellent method of achieving solid and regular contact. However, it was highlighted that there is a balance to be struck between effective communication and bombarding participants with messages and/or pressurising participants to attend.

Conclusion

Activity 1 introduced the afternoon group work collaborative sessions. This first activity was centred around defining the benefits, challenges and methods involved in delivering participatory arts projects. The format appeared to be straightforward and easily understood by the groups. The outcome was an excellent and enthusiastic exercise, which significantly aided in the articulation of specific key points, which were recorded by each group on sheets of card. One participant from each table then gave a short summary to the wider conference of the key responses defined in the discussion. Whilst a couple of participants appeared slightly reluctant to 'present' to the other delegates, this quickly dissolved as the feedback session got underway and a wide variety of people from different organisations had constructive and articulate contributions to make. The session provided a range of important key points, as discussed above, and laid the foundations for building on this knowledge base during activities 2 and 3.



Delegates working in groups on activity 1.

“
If they understood the complexities and value of this type of practice, they might be more willing to invest in it”

A delegate's comments on funding bodies, during activity 2 of the Designing Participation conference.

Activity 2:

Evaluation techniques

Research analysed by Julia Johnson

Evaluation often plays an important role in providing a valid representation of participants' experiences during participatory arts programmes in order to improve delivery. However, there is growing recognition amongst those practising within the field that funding restrictions necessitate a climate where evaluation is shaped and directed to meet its criteria. Emerging from this issue, a dichotomy exists between participatory arts facilitators' and participants' active and shared understanding of success and, in comparison, its autocratic counterpart assumed by distanced funding bodies. The concept of 'deceit' - that emerged from discussions during activity 1 - continued to be discussed by many facilitators, embodying the reality that facilitators must present one facet of their participatory arts programmes to funders in order to obtain funding and continue delivering programmes in a manner that effectively meets participants' needs.

Activity 2 of the Designing Participation conference therefore focused on the techniques used to evaluate participatory arts programmes. Two questions were used to approach the topic:

What kind of evaluation techniques:

Q4. Provide a genuine understanding of participants' experiences on programme?

Q5. Support the improvement of participatory programmes and projects?

In response to questions 4 and 5, a range of themes emerged whilst groups generated their responses. The connection between evaluation and funding was frequently discussed. The term 'genuine' included in the research question, in the context of understanding participants' experiences, was carefully considered by most of the groups, as were other corresponding terms such as "honesty" and "honest". One group posed the question "can it (i.e. evaluation) ever be fully genuine?" Another group stated "remember who it's for!" These advisory responses potentially contribute to an examination of the current use of evaluation techniques that quantify and reflect a certain type of illusive success that meets funding criteria.

Activity 2 research responses

This section of the report refers to the feedback responses from delegates and from the six overarching themes that emerged during activity 2: evaluation and funding; participant-centred approaches; co-design strategies; creative approaches; continuous and immediate feedback points; and the use of external evaluators.

Evaluation and funding

- o Evaluation techniques are often directly informed by funding criteria.
- o Evaluation informed by funding criteria does not prioritise the participants' experience or the participatory arts programme's improvement.

A significant discussion took place during the activity around the relationship between evaluation and funding. Two delegates called for a dialogue to be set up between participants, facilitators and funding bodies to establish progressive ways of evaluating the success of participatory arts programmes that could be mutually agreed upon between the groups. The two delegates felt that funding bodies were not willing to negotiate such change. However one other delegate within the particular group challenged the perception that funders were consistently autocratic, emphasising that her experience of certain funding bodies was that they were willing to open up a dialogue with her and consider her practice in terms of funding criteria.

Participant-centred approaches

- o Evaluation techniques should be employed to improve the participants' experience as a priority.
- o Participatory arts facilitators must maintain a set of ethical standards to iteratively deliver and evaluate programmes effectively.

One overarching issue amongst groups was a concern about the nature of evaluation in terms of whom its assessment benefited. There was strong agreement amongst groups that evaluation needed to prioritise the experiences of participants in terms of how programmes could be developed to better suit their needs. The concern emerged from what was perceived as the established connection between traditional forms of evaluation and the potential for future funding.

Co-design strategies

- o As a participatory arts facilitator it is essential to draw on the body of research and practice developed and pre-existing within other specialist fields or sectors that you are engaging with, in order to inform evaluation.
- o Participants will develop confidence in providing useful feedback throughout the creative process.
- o Participatory arts facilitators should implement open invitation strategies for participants to provide a range of evaluative responses in order to foster a “culture of honest responses”.
- o Participants should be involved in the design of evaluation in a timely manner.

There was a feeling that, in order to be truly participatory and develop evaluation techniques that establish significant outcomes, co-design methodologies should involve participants in the design of evaluation processes.

Creative approaches

- o There are difficulties and challenges with evaluating something so subjective.
- o Creative responses should be encouraged in the feedback process.
- o Multiple audio/visual methods should be used in the evaluation process.

It was recognised that evaluation techniques should be qualitative and vary in response to the participants and the context of each participatory arts programme. Thus a range of qualitative feedback techniques were listed in order to evaluate programmes, such as verbal, written, conversational, observed and reflected. A range of media and resources to record feedback was also advocated such as video and project diaries.

Continuous and immediate feedback points

- o Participants’ needs should be prioritised in terms of what is being evaluated.
- o Participants’ responses should inform the evaluation process in a timely manner.
- o Evaluation should be embedded into activities.
- o On-going feedback and reflection points appropriate to groups should be implemented; for example, project diaries allow for participants to evaluate daily.

Continuous feedback was advocated amongst the groups, with feedback stages regularly taking place within workshop sessions. One group commented that “evaluation should be part of the overall process”. A further group commented that the relationship between participatory arts practice and evaluation should be “one complete circle” where evaluation is not treated as “a bolt on”.

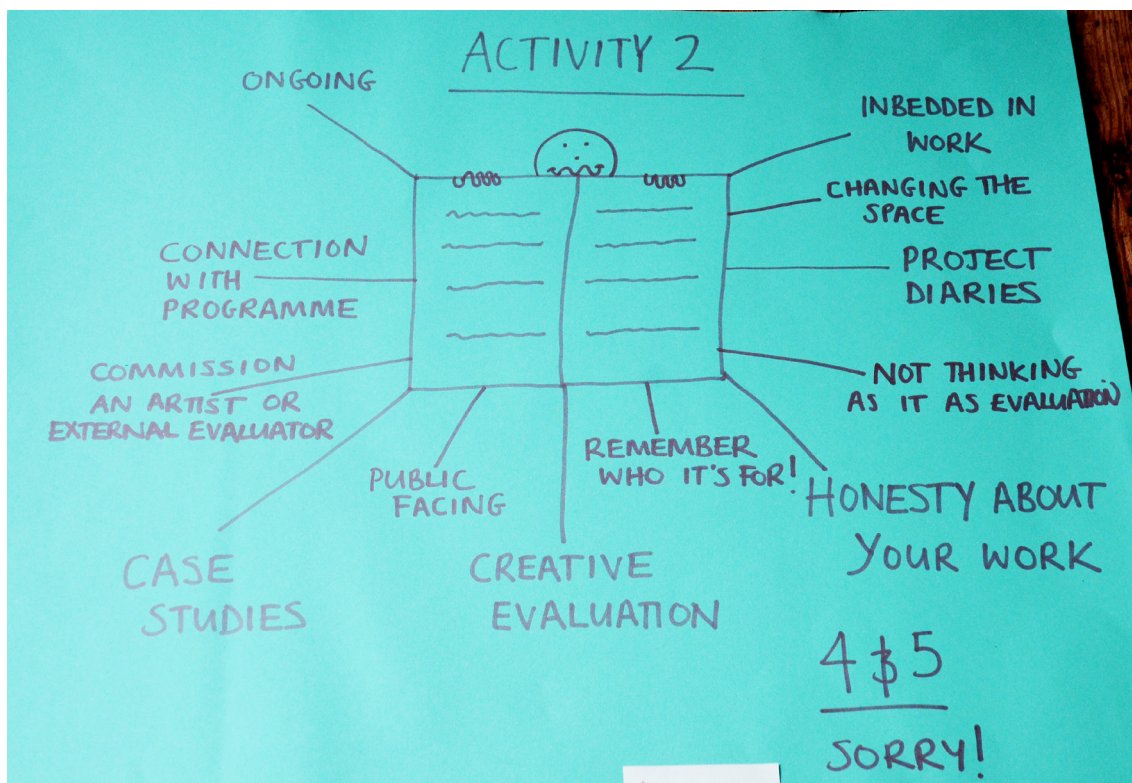
The use of external evaluators

- o Funding bodies should re-invest their money in order to send regional staff out to visit participatory arts organisations to assess their practice in context.
- o External evaluation should be a strategy that is distinctive from on-going feedback.

External evaluators:

- o Can bring a welcome objectivity to the evaluation process.
- o Must be sensitively informed and knowledgeable of the particular specialist practice being employed during the participatory arts process.

The role of external evaluators provides an objective perspective for the assessment of participatory arts programmes, as well as providing support within a specific discipline. A crucial point raised during this discussion was that external evaluators need to have an appropriate and informed knowledge of the methodology and the creative practice being employed to be able to thoroughly and rigorously assess the strengths of programmes and indicate areas for improvement.



Activity 2 research responses.

Conclusion

Three out of the five groups seemed to connect their responses to both questions 4 and 5 by presenting them together on one side of the card during the feedback session. One of the groups went on to articulate the relationship between both questions whilst presenting their feedback.

In order to prioritise the evaluation of participants' experiences, most groups advocated the use of creative techniques to evaluate activities that fitted seamlessly into the participatory process. There was a sense that evaluation techniques should be embedded into the work produced by participants in an on-going and dynamic manner. One group commented that facilitators should employ "techniques instead of evaluation? As evaluation implies different audiences." This point indicated, once again, that evaluation techniques should ideally be employed to provide participatory arts programmes with time and agency to develop their projects effectively, rather than as a marker of success to appease funding bodies.

Whilst qualitative techniques employed to evaluate participants' experiences were consistently referred to as useful tools by many of the delegates, there were references to quantifiable methods on two separate occasions that included comments such as "cold hard questionnaire" and "tick-box" exercises implying that this method of evaluation was not considered to be an effective tool in evaluating participants' experiences by some groups. Despite this, one group did advocate the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

By this stage in the afternoon's activities, delegates were confident about expressing their opinions with one another and feeding back to the wider audience. This specific topic is politicised by its relationship with funding. There was possibly a sense of frustration amongst some delegates, exacerbated by the fact that there were not any funding bodies represented at the conference. Despite this, delegates provided essential feedback that was fundamental to generating research around this topic.

“There is a greater need for participatory arts now that we are in such a difficult social, economic and political climate. It is important that we as a sector respond to this”

Quote from a delegate during activity 3 of the Designing Participation conference.

Activity 3:

Future opportunities and directions

Research analysed by Will Renel

The final activity of the day focused on charting the future opportunities and directions for the delivery and evaluation of participatory arts programmes. The intention of this final activity was to offer attendees a generative space to contemplate the future for the sector, acknowledging the challenges posed by wider societal issues including austerity and inequality. The activity was structured around two questions:

- Q6. What future opportunities and directions have the potential to inform the effective design and delivery of participatory arts programmes?
- Q7. Our collective manifesto for future participation: What two main points should be taken forward?

From question 6, the group generated thirty-five responses (thoughts, observations or questions) which were written on large coloured paper. These responses are outlined below, structured between seven emerging themes: accessibility, social media and digital, participants, organisations and practitioners, funding, evaluation and broader considerations.

Accessibility

- o How do we improve the accessibility of participatory arts collectively?
- o How does social media impact the accessibility of participatory arts?

Social media and digital

- o Digital/ social media creates opportunities but also presents a risk that producers of participatory arts will become lazy - there is a risk that a culture in which people stop meeting face-to-face will be engendered.
- o Social media has the potential to make communication more accessible.
- o There is a growing backlash against digital - a return to analogue - seen in photography, music and the arts sector more broadly. What are the repercussions (positive and negative) of this on participatory arts?

Participants

- o Important to identify new participatory arts beneficiary groups: refugees, family carers – participatory arts always has moved, and must continue to move, to where the need is.
- o Important to give more power to the participants, creating a more equitable environment between the participant and workshop leader.

Organisations and practitioners

- o Important to develop resilient participatory arts projects.
- o Participatory arts organisations and practitioners must embrace risk and failure.
- o There is a consistent need to develop new focuses for participatory arts: e.g. wellbeing and medicine (could this be backed by the NHS?)
- o Must accept that there is no ‘right’ way.
- o How do participatory arts organisations and practitioners share the new knowledge and practice from this conference going forward?
- o Important that the collaboration between practitioners and organisations is sustained – could the RSA⁵ facilitate this?
- o Could participatory arts adopt a social enterprise model?
- o Increased support for practitioners is vital.
- o Thinking about the wellbeing of everyone involved in a participatory arts programme throughout is important.
- o Open space events for practitioners to share their ideas would be useful.
- o Imagination and creativity are important, they are the ultimate focus of participatory arts.
- o Participatory arts organisations and practitioners must have a recognised ethical structure.
- o Participatory arts should liberate people and allow for mistakes (with sufficient strategies to respond to mistakes as they occur).

Funding

- o How can we rethink participatory arts funding? Could corporate funding make participatory arts more honest and open?
- o There is a potential disconnect between policy/funding and more radical grassroots community organisations. How can this be overcome?

[5] Royal Society of Arts, London

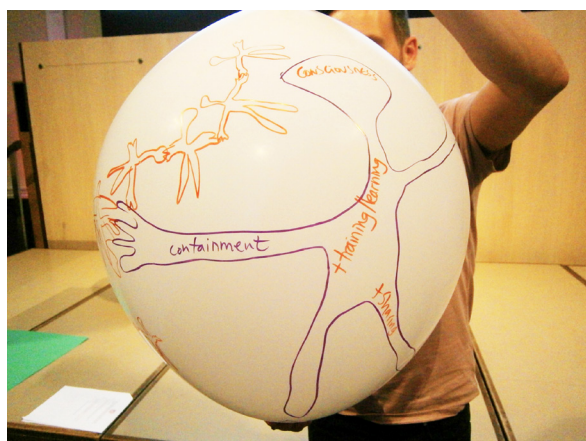
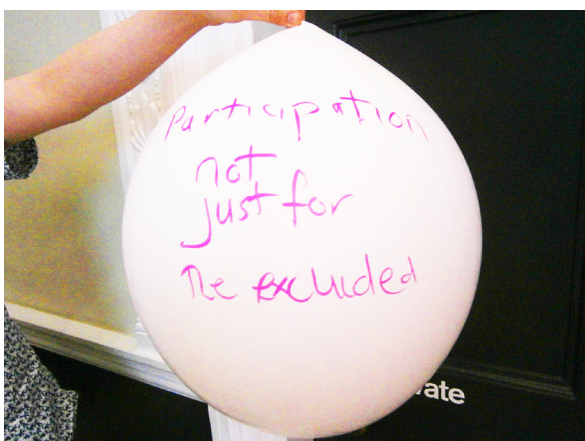
Evaluation

- o Pledge to evaluate in a way that is embedded in the process of delivery, including feedback with/to the funders.
- o Ability to define your own outcomes and decide what success looks like is vital to the development of a robust evaluative process.
- o Does a focus on evaluation detract from the radical nature and possibilities of participatory arts?

Broader Considerations: participatory arts sector and society

- o It is important to collectively address the shared challenges of participatory arts in a transparent way.
- o Can participatory arts embed the value of the arts in individuals from an early age? (this is in response to the societal lack of arts provision).
- o There is a greater need for participatory arts now (and whenever) society is in a difficult social, political and economic climate. How does the participatory arts sector respond to this?
- o Increased sharing between participatory arts organisations (training and methods etc.) is vital in the development of a sustainable sector.
- o What is the definition of 'community' in participatory arts? How does this connect to developing online spaces, digital communities and social media platforms?
- o How does participatory arts connect to other sectors? E.g. NHS and social prescribing, education and the lack of arts in curriculum.
- o What are the financial repercussions (positive and negative) of new relationships between participatory arts and other sectors?
- o How can we create more collective trust within the sector?
- o It is important that participatory arts does not become formulaic and is constantly responding to the world.
- o How can social media encourage more accessible methods of evaluation?
- o Embracing risk and experimentation as a sector is vital.

Following the initial activity around question 6, in response to the final question (7) the groups were asked to select two key points from their discussion to contribute to a collective manifesto. These results were written or drawn by the three groups on giant white balloons.



Activity 3 research responses.

Activity 3 research responses

Collective Manifesto:

1. Finding other/alternative ways to fund participatory arts (e.g PhD funding) is vital.
2. Evaluating the evaluators
 - a. Ensuring that lines of communication between organisations and funders are increased and that the organisational perspective on the most effective way to evaluate participatory arts is sustained.
3. Stop participatory arts being only for certain people
 - a. Understanding that participatory arts is not just for excluded individuals or communities – reducing the stigma surrounding participatory arts that it is solely a therapeutic idea.
4. “Don’t be a dick”⁶
5. Opportunities
 - a. Pounds
 - b. Respect
 - c. Accessibility
 - d. Ethics
 - e. Funding
6. The big and little spaces:
 - a. A ‘big space’ between the participant[s] and the institution[s] responsible for participatory arts delivery, this space should be filled with: creativity.
 - b. The little space[s] between ethics, creativity, health and safety and emotional support. The shared space between these four elements should be explored further through participatory arts projects.
 - c. Creativity and imagination is/should be bottom-up (participant-led) not top-down (institution-led)

[6] A reference made by a conference delegate who was quoting the photographer J A Mortram: the delegate had attended a seminar in Norwich (March 2017) and remembered the photographer making this point when being asked by attendees how to go about building relationships with people.

Conclusion

Activity 3 provided some valuable insights into the collective thoughts of the attendees with regards to future opportunities and directions for the delivery and evaluation of participatory arts programmes.

Attendees seemed generally clear about the overall aims of the activity though some commented that the language and structure of the two questions was potentially over-complicated. Most of the groups enjoyed the opportunity to draw/write their feedback on a giant balloon. One group, who decided to illustrate their feedback rather than write it, commented: “the balloon was a fascinating experience, which became a very creative experience”. One group seemed to find the balloon feedback difficult, though perhaps this related to a difficulty in selecting two elements from their fruitful discussion, rather than a problem with the method. They commented: “this task was difficult to undertake, it was difficult to just put two things on a balloon”. The collective manifesto co-created by all the attendees presents a precise collation of the broader themes of the day and gives a clear representation of the collective goals outlined by the attendees.

Final summary of conference outcomes

by Julia Johnson

The Designing Participation conference provided a platform for participatory arts facilitators and researchers to open up a dialogue and generate significant research outcomes defined by the plurality of voices present.

The issue of funding was raised during activities 1 and 2 by delegates, becoming a significant point of discussion amongst groups, due to its far-reaching impact on participatory arts design and delivery. Strategies to communicate with participants attending programmes were addressed in activity 1: it was emphasised that communication should be implemented effectively and sensitively using appropriate tools in order to encourage participants to attend programmes regularly. The notion amongst certain facilitators of “deceit” – that deceiving funders is necessary in order to manage project outcomes – was tempered by the need for a culture of “openness” and of “honest responses” as prescribed in the write-up activity by two separate groups during activity 2.

This report therefore calls for a dialogue to be opened between funding bodies, facilitators and participants to establish new ways of designing and evaluating participatory arts programmes and to determine these strategies through a collective voice. Specific research activities, involving those who access participatory arts programmes, should inform the design of programme engagement tools to ensure their efficiency.

In terms of evaluation, the process immediately presents a set of contradictions. There are difficulties with quantifying the subjectivity of participants’ experiences on programmes. It was emphasised in the original ACE 2010 report,⁷ which this conference report follows up on, that the thirteen companies included as evidencing best practice demonstrated a “low visibility” of project outcomes. Whilst this is indeed ethical, given the stigma and vulnerability experienced by many of the communities that participatory arts programmes engage with, the dissemination of project videos online can be an attractive tool for organisations given their potential to increase funding opportunities.

[7] Arts Council England. (2010) *Adult Participatory Arts. Thinking it through. A review commissioned from 509 Arts.* [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/adult_participatory_arts.pdf>.

Delegates attending the conference discussed the difficulties with quantifying the success of participatory arts programmes, and furthermore contributing to discussions around evaluation, due to the fact that facilitators were consistently practising “a philosophy of action” situated within an ethical framework.

Research around this subject can reveal that the current expectation, to contribute to the evidence base in a quantifiable and timely manner as prescribed by funding bodies, necessitates the call amongst practitioners for the recognition of emergent evaluation techniques.⁸ These innovative techniques acknowledge the complexity of participatory arts environments and the number of variables involved in their practice, responding iteratively whilst adapting their evaluation techniques to the ever-changing dynamic. Furthermore, the strategy advocates the involvement of participants in the co-design of evaluation techniques.

Despite this, funding bodies are slow to acknowledge the benefits of such techniques, arguably due to the fact that projects employing these approaches would require funding over an extended period, to allow for participatory arts facilitators to return to communities where participatory arts programmes have taken place and evaluate the potential changes occurring since delivery.

The notion of community was considered during activities 1 and 3 in terms of participant profiles and accessibility. Delegates examined the authorship of programmes in terms of their co-design with communities. On a practical level, delegates discussed the need to foster a culture where the arts is delivered at an early age. These particular contributions are all the more urgent given the lack of diversity amongst British arts audiences and the current threat to the delivery of arts in schools.⁹ The Warwick Commission Report effectively demonstrates this lack of accessibility and calls for a “united and coherent approach that guarantees equal access for everyone to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life”.¹⁰ A vast range of participatory arts companies have acquired an abundance of expertise in fostering socially inclusive programmes that reveal and respond to the needs of diverse, often invisible, communities. This report calls for local governments, councils, education and health services to draw on the expertise of participatory arts companies to ensure these fundamental needs are met.

[8] Preskill, H., & Gopal, S. (2014) *Evaluating Complexity: propositions for improving practice*. [Internet] Available from: <<http://www.fsg.org/publications/evaluating-complexity>>.

[9] The Guardian. (2015) *Arts and Culture being ‘systematically removed from UK education system’* [Internet]. Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/feb/17/arts-and-culture-systematically-removed-from-uk-education-system>>

[10] The University of Warwick. (2015) *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth. The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value*. [Internet]. Available from: <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/>>

On a larger scale there was discussions around the value of arts to communities during difficult political climates. Research recognises that participatory arts programmes can help to facilitate a dialogue between communities and distanced governing bodies as well as providing participants with a political voice to affect social change.

On a critical note, the Designing Participation conference remained very London-centric. The organising researchers invited participatory arts organisations from other locations, however the companies and institutions who attended the conference were mostly London-based. This is all the more concerning due to the fact that the original ACE 2010¹¹ report only included participatory arts companies who were London-based.

ACE has recently started to provide more funding for arts initiatives outside of London¹² and there is great potential for participatory arts organisations to support marginalised communities situated in various locations across England and the UK. Further research must be generated in collaboration with these vital participatory arts organisations.

The final outcome of this research report is demonstrated in a collective and robust manifesto (page 27), generated by conference delegates, as a way of moving forward in participatory arts practices. It is, however, most conceivable that many of these opportunities are dependent on continued funding in the sector. The work carried out by the participatory arts companies practising in the UK is fundamental to the health and indeed the survival of our society. The organising researchers anticipate this report's contribution to the growing evidence base around participatory arts programmes – and its potential to support future funding opportunities for the participatory arts companies involved in the generation of its research.

[11] Arts Council England. (2010) *Adult Participatory Arts. Thinking it through. A review commissioned from 509 Arts*. [Internet]. Available from: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/adult_participatory_arts.pdf>.

[12] The Guardian. (2017) *Arts Council England to spend £170m more outside of England*. [Internet]. Available from: <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2017/jun/27/arts-council-england-to-spend-170m-more-outside-london-plymouth-tees-valley-bradford>>.

Researchers' profiles

Julia Johnson

Julia Johnson is a practice-based researcher working in collaboration with the National Health Service, practising with the University of the Arts London and funded by London Doctoral Design Centre. Her research assesses the therapeutic value of photography and participation to support recovery via the delivery of participatory photography programmes to people accessing NHS mental health services. After completing a literature search around participatory arts research, Julia conceptualised the objectives for the Designing Participation conference as a research-led activity, obtaining funding from London Doctoral Design Centre to lead the delivery of the conference. Julia's practice includes facilitating a range of participatory photography programmes. She currently works as an Associate Lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. Julia's own photographic and multimedia documentary practice includes working with a range of marginalised communities: Soldiers who have experienced issues such as homelessness, alcoholism, or entered the criminal justice system in the aftermath of conflict; Traveller and Gypsy communities; Slovakian Roma communities, Vietnamese Refugee communities and Eastern European migrant workers.

Conference presentations:

- o *Culture, Health and Wellbeing conference*, Arts and Health Southwest, Bristol (21.06.17)
- o *Designing Participation: current approaches and future directions*, Royal Society of Arts, London (26.05.17)
- o *Culture and Community*, Anglia Ruskin University Cambridge (03.06.16)

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Jack Champ

Jack Champ is a designer, researcher and photographer based in Brighton, UK. He studied architecture BA(hons) and MArch at the University of Brighton before undertaking a PhD at Kingston University, supported by the London Doctoral Design Centre (LDoc). His ongoing research interest focuses on the use of design methods from across disciplines to innovate in the field of substance misuse and prototype design tools, which place creativity at the centre of the recovery process. Current research activities focus on co-designing and piloting creative engagement tools with support service users at several stages of recovery.

Conference presentations:

- o *Culture, Health and Wellbeing International Conference*, Bristol (20.06.17)
- o *Designing Participation: current approaches and future directions*, Royal Society of Arts, London (26.05.17)
- o *Design PhD Conference*, Lancaster (03.07.15)

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Jack Champ tested a creative recovery tool amongst delegates at the Designing Participation conference.

Will Renel

Will Renel is a PhD Candidate at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art. His practice as an artist and designer emerges at the junctions between sound, interaction and social inclusion research. Will has worked with numerous academic, arts and charity organisations across the UK, is a director of community interest company Touretteshero and co-founder of interactive performance company Loki. His PhD research at the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design explores the ways in which sound socially includes and excludes D/deaf and disabled people from society with a specific focus on cultural urban environments such as arts centres and theatres. By situating the historical perspectives of acoustic ecology, aural architecture and sonic ethnography within the contemporary trajectory of inclusive design practice the research introduces a new framework for 'sonically inclusive design'.

Conference presentations:

- o *Designing Participation: current approaches and future directions*, Royal Society of Arts, London (26.05.17).
- o *Sonic Accessibility: towards a creative understanding of sound and social inclusion* Design Management Engineering, University of Cambridge (23.03.16) hosted by Cambridge Engineering Design Centre and the Inclusive Design Research Centre at Tongji University, China.
- o *Designing for Sound and The Social* - IRCAM Forum, Centre Pompidou, Paris (17.03.17).

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